

Indians on the Rout by John Ortiz

It's time now
because the rent is due
and the Indians are on the rout
We've been waiting a stolen century
for the lease to run out
and the Indians are on the rout
We've been waiting a forgotten lifetime
for the sands of time to blow our way
and for the scriptures to trust us
and the Indians are on the rout
all the pages have fallen off the calendar
and you still haven't paid your dues
and the Indians are most definitely on the rout
the rents past due
we've come to collect
we've come to collect
do not pass go, do not collect two hundred
thousand miles
because it's time now
because the rape is coming again
and the earth doesn't give refills
Indians on the rout
we slowly tire of watching white boys
waltzing with Golden Sarapes,
stolen from the wombs of brujas, and
Jade plucked from the eyes of
wise men
that Indian finally jumped off the nickel,
and the Buffalo are returning from the west.

Mariachis will no longer have to tune their gritos
to B flat, and war dances will no longer
have to be choreographed to accommodate
the arrangement written to entertain tourists
from Custer, South Dakota.
Indians on the rout
How can I explain to my children that
war paint doesn't come from Max Factor,
and that Crazy Horse wasn't crazy
nor was he a horse
How can I best explain that John Wayne is
a Hitlerian character
in an American Wagnerian?
or that there are no Indians in Cleveland,
and no chiefs in Kansas City,
no braves in Atlanta
and only red NECKS in Washington?
or that Pontiac isn't a car
or that Jim Thorpe doesn't look like Burt Lancaster
or that Tonto was no tonto
or that kimosabe means Honky

The Indians are on the rout
because the rent is due
on Manhattan Island
we're sending a cadre of raped women
you must pay the damages on the
psyche of wretched
you must pay the damages
because we must paint the sky again

and we can only hope the rainbow will return
the sirt of fat bellied, sullen eyed children
will come to collect
because it's time now &
the Indians are on the rout
I'm sorry
if this payment interrupts
your Thanksgiving Dinner
or the Army-Navy Game
I'm sorry
for you must pay your dues and
pay them now
because the Indians are on the rout
Geronimo is coming out of retirement
He is alive & living in the projects
I hope you understand
we grow tired of watching
hippies in headbands
claiming Don Juan as their own
I'm sorry but we grow slowly tired
of watching your prodigal son, circumcised
for the Jewish vote
I'm sorry,
but we grow tired of watching you
play golf on the moon
I am truly sorry
but we are tired of your
endless bellies never filled by
your myriad circuses
because Malcolm was right
because we didn't land on Plymouth rock
Plymouth rock landed on us
I'm sorry
but the third party has been organized and
it's a war party, a strange recipe
loosely resembling welfare lines and country jails
the battle cry is a quiet scream
of agony
of the last Indian about to self destruct
the theme is being written by
schizophrenic self-defacing cockroach people
tired tecatos, lifeless women
whose youth was stolen from them
like a cruel joke
I'm sorry
you can no longer frighten us
with absurd visions of half-crazed chinos
with M-16's storming up Malibu Beach
get your suburbs in a circle
because it's time now
because the rent is due
without reservation
the Indians are on the Rout
and

can
wait
no
longer